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Reversal in Practice

DISCUSSION in Oak Bay of a proposal under which that municipality would establish its own public library as a separate entity, without connection with the regional service now given by the Victoria Public Library, opens a new phase of an old question. Obviously it is fully within the competence of Oak Bay to establish its own library if it wishes to do so. It is also probable that the annual sums contributed by Oak Bay to the city institution would be sufficient to amortize a moderate construction debt and leave something over to go towards the initial staffing and stocking of a local institution. That is from the short-term view, but how about the future?

The trend of modern library development today in a region such as Greater Victoria is towards the creation of full regional library accommodation and facilities. Under that, each municipality within the area would draw its books from the central library stack room, with the advantage of both volume and choice that major collections of books can offer. As areas develop, branch library buildings, still fed from the same central pool, come into existence in each locality where they are needed. The permanent advantages of unified management, bulk buying, central staffing, indexing and so forth are available to the whole system.

The Greater Victoria region has not yet attained that status in its joint library endeavors, but year by year it has been coming closer to the time when such a development would pay on behalf of the community as a whole. While Oak Bay would have the right to decide to withdraw from the agreement in existence up to this time, such a step would have material consequences beyond its own borders. If Greater Victoria elected one day to proceed with a regional library set-up, Oak Bay might find itself on the outside, wanting in. There can be little question that in library service joint efforts, and not isolated ones, create the physical structure needed before effective service can be given.

Confidence Shaken

REJECTION by the United States government, through one of its agencies, of a British manufacturer's low bid on a contract to supply turbines for a power project in Arkansas might appear on the face of it to be none of Canada's business. At a time, however, when the Dominion is seeking a greater measure of co-operation from the United States in the production of weapons, missiles and other requirements for mutual defence, the American government's flimsy explanation of its action on the British tender is cause for serious misgiving in this country.

The circumstances of this case briefly were these: English Electric, one of the world's largest manufacturers of heavy generating machinery, submitted a price 19 per cent below the bid of the nearest United States competitor. Under the Buy American Act a U.S. government contract must be awarded to a foreign firm if its tender is 6 per cent below the lowest domestic bid. If, however, domestic manufacture is experiencing serious unemployment, provision is made for acceptance of an American tender so long as it is not more than 12 per cent above the foreign bid.

In no way, therefore, could the Buy American Act properly be invoked against English Electric. The U.S. Office of Civil and Defence Mobilization got around this by refusing the bid on the unexplained ground of "national security", though by no stretch of the imagination could it be described as a defence contract.

Some sections of the United States press have vehemently condemned this disruption of America's good relations with the United Kingdom. The Washington Post says it "makes a sham of American trade policy and belies the administration's word." What is worrying to the Dominion is the thought that if the U.S. can so easily push aside its proclaimed trade policy to accommodate internal political pressure in connection with a deal with the United Kingdom it could do the same to Canada.

Keeping the Secrets

SOCRED members of the public accounts committee blocked an attempt to examine the expenditures of government agencies like the PGE, the Highways Toll Authority, and the Workmen's Compensation Board. Health Minister Martin said such accounts were beyond the responsibility of the committee. In other words, hands off by this committee of the Legislature.

There is doubtless some ground for arguing that these agencies operate separately from normal government direction, and so are outside the scope of legislative scrutiny because of their independent status. How far this view should prevail is a moot point, however, when government funds are employed either directly or by way of guarantee to keep them in being. Some concern at least in their accounting records would seem to be warranted by the public accounts committee.

The instance of the Toll Bridges and Highways Authority in particular, which receives a direct annual subsidy, is worth noting. This in essence is an extension of the highways department, and if originally desired could have been kept within the scope of that department. It was more convenient and perhaps easier of operation to keep it separate; that should not mean it is turned into a secret society, however.

The ruling personnel of this authority is interesting. Except for Mr. Einar Gunderson, the board consists entirely of cabinet ministers—Premier Bennett, Mr. Gaglardi, Mr. Kiernan, Mr. Wicks and Mr. Black. It is patently a government board in fact as well as in name. It is stretching logic rather far, therefore, to suggest that what these government members do is beyond the inquiry of a legislative committee. The function of this committee is to examine the accounts of ministerial departments.

If exemption from inquiry were carried to extreme lengths a government could transfer all its business into crown agencies beyond legislative responsibility, and the public could never learn about its own affairs. That is about the size of it, at least with the cabinet dominated toll authority.

Interpreting the News

Preparing a Reply

By GEORGE KITCHEN
Canadian Press Staff Writer

THE West now can be expected to shape swiftly a unified policy on the future of Germany.

State Secretary Dulles' return to Washington from a five-day policy co-ordinating trip to London, Paris and Bonn signified the Allies are ready to put down in black and white their counter-proposals to Soviet demands on Berlin and the German question generally.

Their first step likely will be taken in the framing of a joint reply to a Soviet note of Jan. 10 proposing a 28-nation peace conference to work out a German peace treaty. The note, addressed to 27 other nations which fought against Hitler's forces in the Second World War, suggested an early meeting in Warsaw or Prague.

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Experts from Britain, the U.S., France and West Germany have been working on the reply in Washington for the last week. It now is expected to take final shape on the basis of Dulles' talks abroad.

The reply likely will include one concrete counter-proposal—a foreign ministers conference, probably early in May, to deal with a broad range of German problems including Berlin and the general question of the reunification of Germany.

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It likely would be at this conference, if the Soviets agree to attend one, that the West would make known the concessions, if any, that it is prepared to make in an effort to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on the future of Germany.

Before leaving Bonn during the weekend, Dulles said the West was prepared to make "concessions" on West Berlin and German reunification if the Soviet Union, for its part, would offer "counterpart" concessions.

The British Scene... by Giles

"Sarge—half the company's reported sick with emotional distresses and the other half because they're allergic to rock 'n' roll."

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

I SUPPOSE doodling is as good a method of choosing a national flag as any other. Many a lady picks a winner at the races by stabbing the program with a pencil.

The idea is the same, a vague gesture while one's mind is on another subject. The lady, you see, would be assessing the other feminine hats on display while her pencil was wandering.

This, I find, after doodling on and off myself for endless years, is what a doodle is. It would be the aimlessness of flying bombs during the war that caused them to be termed doodlebugs.

Actually I believe that the dictionary, often a very accommodating medium which can encompass a queer variety, also cites bagpipe playing as doodling, but this is a dangerous angle to pursue. I have a friend who is a pipe-major.

* * *

We are all doodlers, more or less. Some people are better at the business than others, which suggests that at least half their minds have been on the job of dawdling on paper. In a sour mood one might even conclude that some doodles, done on canvas with paint, find their way onto art gallery walls.

Premier Frost of Ontario, who has set the domestic flag scene astir with his prize doodle, is going one better than any artist, however. His creation, if one may so describe an idle trifling with a serious subject, would not be confined within a gallery. It would be waved in the breeze for all to see.

His patriotism is not to be doubted but his ability as a doodler, perhaps, is. He has been devoted to this hobby—one can scarcely call it an art in spite of art galleries and Picasso's latest mural for a UN building—for a great many years, he says, and this is the result.

Frankly, after so much gestation, it is disappointing.

Ten doodled maple leaves added to the Red Ensign! Not a tremendous innovation, all things considered. The opposition members in the Ontario legislature, who must often have watched him doodling instead of listening to their words of wisdom, are not likely to feel complimented. Their eloquence should have inspired him to something more original, even by avoidance.

The Red Ensign already has three maple leaves, and so 13 in all rather overdoes things. Ontario prefers to sing the "Maple Leaf" rather than "O Canada," however, so the doodling may not have been altogether haphazard.

* * *

Mr. Frost's new flag may not be so much a doodle as a hint of Ontario's official flag preference. That is, the present flag with more maple leaves "doodled in," as he puts it, round the coat-of-arms.

As a doodle, or a design for that matter, it doesn't seem much of an improvement. One objection to the Red Ensign, since this ensign is not peculiar to Canada, is that the coat-of-arms is not easily identifiable except at close quarters. That means it is a poor distinguishing mark.

Embellishment by 10 more maple leaves would confuse the view and make the Canadianism of the Ensign harder to spot than ever.

Anyway, I don't know that doodling is a respectable parentage for a national emblem. Maybe the world isn't talking about this country's inability to settle its flag question—maybe it is, of course—but if it were bruited that the Canadian flag owed its design to a doodle, the chancelleries could be excused a secret smile.

Undoubtedly they would conclude we were a race of doodlers; and by jove on the matter of a national flag we are. Perhaps in doodling a design Mr. Frost is on sound ground after all.

Letter from London

Currency Control for Political Aims

By RICHARD L. THOMAS

THE British Labor Party has given advance notice that if it is returned to power at the general election there will be no further steps towards the complete convertibility of the pound and the dollar. Mr. Gaitskell has told Parliament that the socialists believe in strict controls, and it was obvious that he was speaking with the full approval of his party.

The Conservatives on the other hand have let it be known that they are working towards complete convertibility and the possible snag in the socialist declaration is that convertibility may, in fact, have been brought about before the general election, in which case Labor might well have to decide to reintroduce controls.

Behind the socialist declaration there is obviously some inspiration from the anti-American factions within the party. Mr. Gaitskell has said that with convertibility American companies would be able to transfer larger dividends from their British activities. He believed that it would reduce employment in Britain and encourage speculation by businessmen and was insistent that government controls should be retained.

* * *

The argument reflects the basic conflict between socialism and conservatism in Britain. The Tories believe that the pound should stand on its own feet and that it's strength should be real strength and not dependent upon artificial support and controls. It is admitted that a flight of capital is a possibility—a calculated risk—and politically far more likely at this pre-election time, because a number of people fearful of a socialist win at the poll would prefer to have their capital in dollars.

Mr. Gaitskell has not improved the position by admitting the socialist devotion to controls. On the other hand he has probably done something to stave off complete convertibility until after the election. If the government decided—as has been forecast—upon a free pound by next April it would allow considerable pre-election speculation, which in turn could run down reserves and create a financial crisis. In face of the declaration it seems probable that the government will defer convertibility until after the general election and make it at least a minor election issue.

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It would, of course, be no more than a minor issue. The average British elector is either indifferent to or befogged by the economic arguments on financial controls. There is no violent enthusiasm either way. The ordinary citizen is far more concerned with the value of the pound in his pay packet and what it will buy than he is about his ability to buy dollars with it without asking permission.

The vast implications of convertibility are lost to the domestic voter. He is not greatly concerned as to whether it would increase dollar investment in this country or would mean that British investors would transfer investments to dollar areas with a consequential shortage of local capital and expansion in industry. Some bankers with whom I have spoken believe that convertibility would encourage dollar investment in the sterling area—primarily because it would ensure the payment of dividends as of right instead of by complicated arrangements with the Bank of England. They admit equally that some British investors would be tempted to transfer to dollar investments now denied to them. The question was whether the two transactions would cancel out.

* * *

The point too often overlooked—and persistently overlooked when the socialists formed the government—is that dollar investments in the ordinary course of business produce dollar dividends which in turn are converted into sterling. Again the question is one of balance—whether, for example, dollar dividends into sterling would balance sterling dividends transferred to dollars. The ordinary method of adjustment of these balances is through the exchange rate, which in turn depends upon supply and demand. Canadians have discovered that the attractiveness of Canadian investment to Americans has created an exchange rate which has proved embarrassing to exporters. The argument here is that if there was any marked flight of capital from Britain it would be quickly reflected in the exchange rate which would make further transfers unattractive.

Economists are divided in their opinions as to the effect of convertibility, but few as a matter of principle believe in controls.

The basic question is whether currency should be controlled politically to attain political ends. The socialists say quite bluntly that it should and the Conservatives admit that while it may be expedient on occasions it is undesirable. Economists themselves are divided, arguing that while controls can create effects which may be politically desirable, they make no contribution to the moral issue of freedom. If, as the socialists argue, economic power is the most potent power in the world, there can be no freedom without economic freedom.

That of course merely starts another argument. Is it freedom to transfer capital and deprive a Briton of a job in the process? Alternatively will the Briton be able to get a job as the result of dollar capital coming to Britain? In the past international currencies have survived or declined according to normal economic laws. Is that possible again? The Conservatives argue that the pound should have, and has, the strength to stand on its own feet provided that there is freedom within the country. It is the socialist arguments of more nationalization, more controls and a "planned economy" which would endanger the freedom of the pound by undermining confidence.

Labor's Bill of Rights

Shoring Up Democracy

(From The Toronto Globe and Mail)

THE scandalous extent to which a few United States labor union leaders have engaged in plunder, blackmail, intimidation and other lawless practices has become a major issue before all branches of government in Washington. Following various Supreme Court hearings and Congressional inquiries, Democrats in the Senate and President Eisenhower himself have placed three pieces of corrective legislation before Congress. There is substantial agreement in principle between these proposals, but the president's measure is the most sweeping in scope.

It was immediately welcomed as a "bill or rights for labor," but it goes further than that. It would substantially restore democratic principles of honesty, mutual tolerance, and respect for personal freedom and property rights. The desecration of these principles has impaired the freedom of persons, the security of justice and even the functions of legislatures.

The President's 20-point program for new legislation and for strengthening the Taft-Hartley Law avoids both retaliatory and punitive measures. It is based on the reasonable assumption that the vast majority of unions and union members, together with employers and the general public, will welcome the long overdue reforms.

The three cardinal provisions advanced by the President would make genuinely democratic election of union officers mandatory; would prevent "blackmail" picketing to force unwilling employees into unions they do not want to join; and would require all unions to submit detailed annual financial reports to their members and to the government, such reports being open to public inspection. Heavy penalties would be provided for evasion of this section.

The legislation aims a concentrated blow at abuses, instead of dealing with them serially over a period of time, as advocated by Democratic senators who have bills scheduled for debate.

A large body of union members probably would oppose any law compelling them to incorporate their organizations, and thus establish status as "legal persons." It is obvious, however, that incorporation, with legal responsibilities commensurate with the privileges set out in their charters, would have prevented the abuses and public scandals now under attack from both sides of Congress.

But perhaps the American unions themselves, after they have operated under their new bill of rights, will voluntarily seek incorporation as the ultimate guarantee of protection from the forms of gangsterism that have been imposed upon them as a result of their presently tenuous constitutional status.

The Packsack

By GREGORY CLARK

THE tuba is that enormous horn you see in bands and orchestras looming brassily over everybody's head and apparently engulfing its player, as the serpents surround the Laocoon. Its function, I have been told, is not unlike that of the bass fiddle or the drums. It contributes to the beat. It is an instrument of emphasis.

And all the years I have known it the tuba has emitted nothing but short, deep toots, not unlike drum beats. It has been fascinating to watch the tuba player as he puffs out his cheeks in an extraordinary series of brief poofs, not unlike a fat-boy getting rid of cherry pits, and him with a basketful of cherries. Many a concert have I whiled away dividing my attention between the tuba player and his ponderous oomps-oomps, and the bass fiddle player who always appears to be lost in thought as, with bow arm hanging low, he saws away at his huge fiddle, looking at nothing, the figure of ennui.

But within recent months, the tuba has been coming into its own. Many of the newest pop tunes allow it to emit an enormous blast at the end of a bar. A long-drawn-out, rumbling blaaaah like the sound the hot water tap in an old house makes when you don't quite turn it off enough, and the whole house shudders.

I am looking forward to the day I see a tuba player blow that note. How he must swell!

With the Classics

Glory is like a circle of water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself
Till by broad spreading it disperse to nought.

—SHAKESPEARE.